

## Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY TANANARIVE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7997

C O N F I D E N T I A L TANANARIVE 324

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PGOV, MA, US

SUBJ: CHARGE'S CALL ON PRIME MINISTER

REF: TANA 0318

1. DURING MY FEB. 28 CALL ON PRIME MINISTER RAKOTOMALALA, BOTH OF US SPOKE OF NEED TO IMPROVE OUR RELATIONS. I POINTED OUT THAT US HAS BEEN ABLE TO MAINTAIN GOOD RELATIONS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES WHICH HAVE DIFFERENT IDEOLOGIES THAN OURS. HOWEVER, I ADDED, WE HAVE BEEN SUBJECTED TO ADVERSE PROPAGANDA BY GOVERNMENTAL SOURCES, USUALLY BY INSINUATION. I CITED ABUSE FROM MADAGASCAR RADIO FROM TIME THAT GDRM CLOSED DOWN THE NASA BASE LAST JULY (I.E., SHORTLY AFTER RATSIRAKA TOOK OFFICE), MENTIONING THE RADIO'S CLAIM LAST WEEK THAT THE BASE HAD BEEN USED FOR SPYING BY SATELLITE.

2. RAKOTOMALALA INTERJECTED WITH A QUESTION ABOUT THE TERMINAL BENEFITS FOR THE EX-NASA EMPLOYEES AND I WAS PLEASED TO TELL HIM THAT THE CHECKS WERE READY AND WOULD BE DISTRIBUTED MARCH 1. HE WAS HAPPY TO HEAR THAT AND SAID THAT I SHOULD MENTION IT TO THE PRESS AT THE END OF OUR MEETING, WHICH I DID, NOTING THAT THE STATUS OF THE NASA BASE WAS HIS RESPONSIBILITY IN THE GDRM, HE STATED THAT HE HOPED WE COULD RESOLVE THE REMAINING NASA ISSUE ONE WAY OR THE OTHER. I REFERRED TO OUR VIEWS ON THE BASE'S STATUS, AS WE PRESENTED THEM TO THE GDRM IN LATE DECEMBER, AND

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ADDED THAT WASHINGTON WAS FIRM IN ITS OPINION. MOREOVER, IT

IS QUITE APPARENT THAT AS TIME PASSES THE VALUE OF THE BASE BECOMES LESS AND LESS SIGNIFICANT TO US. RAKOTOMALALA RESPONDED THAT HE RECOGNIZED THIS AND HE SAW NO REASON WHY THE ISSUE COULD NOT BE CLOSED SATISFACTORILY FOR BOTH SIDES.

3. SINCE RAKOTOMALALA APPEARED TALKATIVE, I SAID THAT I HOPED THAT GDRM WOULD CONSIDER TERMINAL PAYMENTS FOR EX-NASA EMPLOYEES AS EVIDENCE OF OUR GOOD FAITH IN OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS. I STATED THAT, AS I HAD TOLD THE FOREIGN MINISTER (REFTEL), THE GDRM SHOULD NOT OVERLOOK THE USG'S DISMAY WITH HOW VARIOUS THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES HAVE BEEN VOTING IN THE UN AND ELSEWHERE ON ISSUES WHICH ARE OF GREAT SIGNIFICANCE TO US AND IRRELEVANT FOR THEM. I SPECIFICALLY MENTIONED PUERTO RICO. HE NODDED BUT DID NOT RESPOND, WHEREUPON I SAID THAT I DID NOT WISH TO BE CONTENTIOUS BUT I FELT THAT A GOOD AIRING OF THE SITUATION AT THIS TIME MIGHT BE WORTHWHILE. AS WE PARTED COMPANY AT THIS POINT, RAKOTOMALALA EVIDENCED A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF UNDERSTANDING FOR THE DISCUSSION AND INTEREST IN IMPROVING BILATERAL RELATIONS.

4. COMMENT: IN THE PAST, RAKOTOMALALA HAS BEEN FRIENDLY TO THE US (HE VISITED IN MID-1974 ON A LEADER GRANT) BUT HE IS ALSO KNOWN FOR BENDING WITH THE WIND. HE IS NOT EXPERIENCED IN POLITICAL AFFAIRS AND WAS SOMEWHAT ILL AT EASE AT THIS MEETING. I INFER FROM VARIOUS OF HIS STATEMENTS AT OUR MEETING THAT HE PERSONALLY WOULD PREFER TO RESTORE GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE US. SHEINBAUM

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